**An Open Letter To My Past Self**

Dear past self,

One day you’re going to look in the mirror and you are not going to recognise yourself. You appear more angular and a little harsher around the edges. You will smile at your reflection and your face will soften. You are still the same person on the inside.

I am going to have to break some bad news to you.

Your heart is going to ache. Sometimes it will feel like somebody has punched you in the stomach. Other times it will not feel like anything at all. You are going to spend a lot of time wondering which feeling is worse. I hope we figure this out together one day.

Demi-men who have not grown into their personality yet will use you as a crutch and the pressure will feel like all of the mountain ranges on earth are resting on your shoulders. You will stay too long. People who you thought were good for you will not stay long enough. Friends will disappoint you. You will drink too much wine and wonder why you incessantly talk too much and laugh too loud, deciding this is why people do not stay.

You will learn to leave prematurely. You will leave people, places and states of minds. Every time you leave you will grow more and more nostalgic. Your heart is going to sink in the middle of a Tuesday afternoon when you remember the way your third year of university felt, two years after you graduated. Your heart will feel heavy when you remember the smell of your first boyfriends skin, the sound of your old friend’s laughter, the way your brothers sounded before they had learnt to speak. You will find that the hardest thing about growing older is as your age increases as does your capacity for nostalgia.

Nothing, and nobody, is going to cause you more heart ache than you will cause yourself. You are going to censor yourself, you are going to try to shrink yourself smaller, you will envy chameleons for the way they so effortlessly blend into their environment. You will want to disappear. You will want to be a dandelion dispersing under a child’s hot breath. Red lights and stop signs don’t seem very important to you right now, I know you sometimes don’t look left before you cross the road. You won’t jump. One day you won’t want to be pushed, either.

I want you to know this feeling is not perpetual.

You will strive for balance and you are going to fight even when you are tired. You have always had fight. Perhaps you feel that somewhere along the way the glimmer dulled, but strength is an integral part of your being and that isn’t as transient as you would think. You are going to be fist in throat on a bathroom floor and there will still be a glow of hope somewhere amongst the sadness and desperation of it all.

You will not give up on yourself completely.

You will learn the art of embracing authenticity. You will learn to trust in yourself. You were always trusting of others, but never trusting of yourself. This is going to change. You are going to learn to believe in your strength. One day, alone won’t be synonymous with lonely. The universe will respond to your bravery with beautiful people. You will not take them for granted. You will not expect attachment. You will practise appreciation instead of expectation.

Your heart is not going to feel as heavy anymore.

I know you feel a little lost a lot of the time, I know there are a lot of things about yourself and about your life, that you do not understand right now but you are going to grow and thrive. I am writing this letter with a mind softened by the grief, a soul strengthened by the fights, a heart that is wise from the fallouts. Do not give up. I am writing this letter from a place of power, happiness and contentment. Be safe in the knowledge that you are growing towards this.

The view is beautiful.

# A Letter To My Younger Self

Dear 15 year old me,

You probably won't read this letter because it's stuck in a pile of unfinished homework on your bedroom floor, next to the mouldy cups of coffee and your dirty underwear, that you're too bone idle to put in the wash bin.

I'm now double your age, so basically this means I'm an adult. (So stop rolling your eyeballs at this, because although you think I'm old and boring... I'm about to give you the best advice you'll ever hear).

Right, first of all, take your cup full of fungus downstairs and wash it up... Pop your knickers in the wash while you're there. Trust me... your lack of basic self respect for your box room, is going to be used against you at future gatherings.

I know it's annoying and you've got better things to do, like belt out Survivor in your mirror like you mean it, but 'survival' to you right now, is getting credit on your Nokia 3310.... (oh, please)

Make mum a brew... (stop tutting) .... What if I told you, you've only got ten years left of her. She won't be there forever you know, and trust me.....One day, you'd do anything to hear her yell up them stairs again. When you take it to her, tell her how much you love her. You don't know it, but she's going through a lot right now, and she won't admit it because she's protecting you.

You're in such a rush to get out, live on your own, spread your wings, prove something. Why? Gosh seriously, slow down. You don't know how good you've got it!!

Hold on, baby crying, I'll be right back...

I'm back.

Sorry, I hadn't mentioned.... You'll become a mummy.

Two babies! Twins even! Ronnie and Arnie. (I know weird names right?) You'll meet them in 13 years. No, the daddy isn't that boy you're with now. Right now you think you're 'in love', well... I hate to break it to you, but it's just not realistic. He's basically just a boy. This is just 'a thing'. Oh, and he's cheating on you... (for God's sake pull yourself together. You're just kids!)

After a shed load of floating through life, you'll meet Keith. He's the one who will walk you home from the pub every week, but you've both been friend zoned. Four years from now you'll realise he's your soul mate, and he'll make you his wife 6 years later. You'll be happier than you've ever been. You will hit rock bottom. But he'll pick you up, make you laugh again, just when you think you never will. He won't give up on making your dreams come true, so together you'll go through IVF, because believe it or not, your plan to have children when you want them doesn't work out.

News flash... life doesn't work like that!

Look, you're whittling over stupid things right now.

Please, please, please believe me when I say that none of it matters. The homework, your grades, whether mum knows you have a crafty fag on waterworks lane with your mates between lessons, or that you spent your dinner money on a new nail varnish. I'm not saying don't try. What I'm saying is, don't waste precious time worrying about 'what if'. You don't need to! 'What if' I told you, you made it. All you ever wanted. You got it all.

15 years from now, you'll realise that all the forks in the road are choices. It's up to you what way you go. No right or wrong. You'll take a different road in some places to others... good. It will keep you grounded. Mistakes will be made, but you'll learn from them ... you've still got hurdles to tackle along the way and things will jump out at you when you least expect it. But, you'll come through it. Trust me.

Worry less. Let go. Be the best friend you can be. Love beyond measure. Be loved.

Remember, everything that hurts is only for a short while. Healing takes a little longer, so be patient.

Yours sincerely

You.